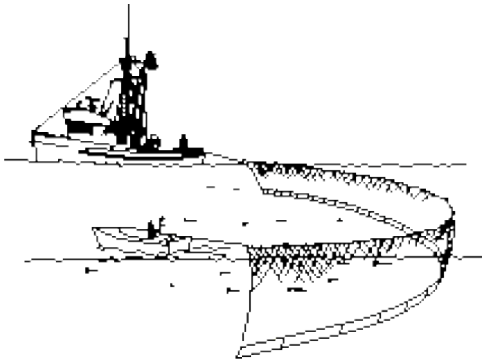

CALIFORNIA WETFISH PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION

Representing California's Historic Fishery

November 30, 2004

Mr. Phil Isenberg, Chair
MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311
Sacramento, CA 95814
Attn: Melissa Miller-Henson

Subject: Draft Master Plan Framework

Dear Mr. Isenberg and Task Force Members:

These comments are submitted on behalf of the California Wetfish Producers Association, representing the views of fishermen and processors in Monterey and southern California who harvest and process "wetfish", including sardines, mackerels and market squid, as well as coastal tunas. California's wetfish industry represents, on average, 80 percent or more of the total volume of seafood produced commercially in California, with a value-added worth estimated at more than $100 million annually. As we noted in our introductory letter to the task force (mailed on November 29 in care of the Resources Agency), this is an historic industry of continuing importance, economically and culturally, both on the central coast in the San Francisco - Monterey Bay area, the initial focus of the MLPA Initiative, as well as in coastal fishing communities in southern California.

CWPA members appreciate this opportunity to comment on the master plan framework for the MLPA Initiative. As this framework is intended to govern implementation of the first project on the central coast, as well as serve as a blueprint for future MPAs in other regions, with the potential for negative social and economic impacts on fishing communities, recommending policies based on the best available, and objective, scientific guidelines is of paramount importance to us.

For that reason we believe it is essential that the master plan framework begin at the begnning, with an introductory "situation summary", placing the MLPA Initiative in context with a realistic and definitive overview of the status of California's marine resources, acknowledging those that are abundant, such as wetfish, those defined as overfished, specific areas or watersheds where non-point source pollution is problematic, as well as effects on California's ocean environment from Mother Nature: natural oceanic systems and cycles. This introduction should:

- acknowledge the natural short-term (ENSO), longer-term (PDO) and meso-scale oceanic effects, including regime shifts, on marine resource abundance, which are separate from human and fishery effects
- acknowledge the absence of scientific consensus on the definition of terms such as biodiversity and ecosystem management, and provide a working definition for the purpose of this mandate, including caveats. (Reference: Alverson 2004. Attachment 1.) For example:

> Recent research points toward functional diversity as an important attribute of ecosystem stability. Stability in this case does not mean equilibrium of a particular species but stability in aggregate attributes (total production). This type of diversity ensures there are sufficient number of species to perform the same function so that if one species declines for any reason (human or climate related) then alternative species can maintain that particular ecosystem function... However, measures of diversity are subject to bias... Furthermore, diversity may not be a sensitive indicator of fishing effects.

PO Box 1951 Buellton, CA 93427 Phone: 805-693-5430 Fax: 805-686-9312
Email: dplesch@earthlink.net

• acknowledge the network of state and federal fishery resource regulations that now exists, prohibiting all harvest, or the harvest of certain species by major gear types, in many areas.

Current marine resource and fishery regulations should be described in detail under Section I. Background. For example:

I. D. Existing recreational and commercial fishery regulations
1. List of regulations and purpose by species group and/or fishery
2. Description of areas now closed by state and/or federal regulation
(a GIS map series should be compiled, illustrating, in addition to existing MPAs, current fishery closures and de facto area closures, such as post 9/11 fishing prohibitions within 2 miles of military installations e.g. Vandenberg AFB, and nuclear facilities, e.g. Diablo nuclear power plant – both of which are located on the central coast)
3. Analysis of the effects of these closures to achieve (or contribute to) goals of the MLPA

I. E. List species defined as overfished and describe current state and federal management measures to recover these stocks

I. F. Identify robust fishery stocks and existing management measures to sustain productivity.

I. G. Identify known "hot spot" areas of pollution and mitigation plans in effect or considered

Under Section II. A. Goals of the Marine Life Protection Program, Goal 2 should be stated as it originally appeared in the MLPA and in the MLPA Summary on the Initiative website: To help sustain, conserve, and protect marine life populations, INCLUDING THOSE OF ECONOMIC VALUE...

Clearly, it is critically important that the framework, as well as the Initiative process as a whole, consider the economic values of fishery resources and the contributions of California's coastal communities, and strive to achieve, in addition to the goals of the MLPA, the over-arching goals of the Governor's Ocean Action Plan, which includes the goal "to support ocean dependent economic activities."

Also under II. A. 5., we suggest for clarity including the word "measurable", e.g. To set clearly defined, MEASURABLE, objectives....
To achieve the stated intent of the marine life protection program to provide a process for adaptive management, it is important that the master plan framework emphasize the need for baseline measurements, as well as performance goals and measurable objectives to assess the success or failure of each MPA and its contribution to the network.

Under Section III. B., sources of information should include existing fishery regulations and their effects in achieving the goals of the MLPA.

Under Section III. C., Requirements of a Master Plan:
Again, this section should begin at the beginning, with explicit definitions of goals and measurable objectives, and a definition of "the problems" by area as Item 1 on this list.
Item 2 should specify analysis of the existing MPAs, fishery closures and de facto closures overlaid on habitat maps to determine the extent of existing closures in aggregate. In addition, this exercise should also consider the impacts of human activity outside fisheries and explore measures to mitigate non-fishery problems without denying further access to fishermen.
Hopefully this effort will facilitate better understanding of the extent of California's ocean already off-limits to fishing, as well as provide a snapshot of potential gaps.

As a subset of III. C. 2 – Identification of species or groups likely to benefit – the framework should also identify species groups likely NOT to benefit from site-specific reserves (e.g. epipelagic species such as

sardines, mackerels, squid, white seabass and others) and the socio-economic impacts of area closures proposed to benefit resident species on those "non-benefitted" industry groups.

In summary, we recommend that the MLPA master plan framework emphasize the following points:

1. The MLPA Initiative process should consider all human impacts not just fishing impacts, following the original intent of the MLPA.
2. The framework should contain a comprehensive statement of situation and purpose, including clear goals and measurable objectives, as well as an introduction placing the MLPA Initiative in the context of existing fishery management and natural oceanic cycles.
3. A comprehensive map, or series of maps, is needed to depict all marine habitat types/areas overlaid with all MMAs, MPAs, Marine Reserves, fishery management closures and de facto area closures. Only with this tool is it possible to begin to understand the impacts and role that additional MPAs may have.
4. The framework should provide for evaluation and modification of existing MPAs and reserves first, before considering new MPAs.
5. The MLPA Initiative should consider existing fishery management strategies in relation to creating new MPAs.
6. The framework should require a clear statement of goals and objectives for each MPA prior to creating additional MPAs.
7. The master plan framework should require that comprehensive baseline science be gathered prior to creating new MPAs.
8. It is essential that "best available" science be used throughout the MLPA Initiative. This includes peer review by independent scientists of all facets of the first and subsequent projects proposed for implementation.
9. In order to assure the best possible, scientifically defensible outcome, which we hope will seek to minimize to the utmost degree possible negative socio-economic impacts on coastal communities, the time lines and due dates established for this project may need to be pushed back again.

We hope this MLPA Initiative process will avoid the pitfalls of the Channel Islands Marine Reserve Working Group process. Specifically, the CINMS science panel was constrained in scope, therefore it did not consider the effects of existing fishery management in its recommendations. Further, MRWG deliberations were constrained by an artificial timeline, hence progress was thwarted. We point to a growing body of evidence indicating the importance of including stakeholders, specifically fishermen, in all facets of the process – from concept to decision-making – to ensure community support for the ultimate product.

In essence, we believe that everyone engaged in the MLPA process needs to operate from the same "playbook", which should include clear definitions, the status of marine resources and fishery management in California, and acknowledgement that other factors besides fishing play a role in resource abundance. That will faciitate speaking the same language.

On behalf of California's historic wetfish industry, I again express our thanks for this opportunity to comment. We intend to remain actively engaged in the Initiative process and look forward to working with the Blue Ribbon Task Force to achieve the goals of the MLPA Initiative while protecting the interests of California's ocean-dependent coastal communities.

Best regards,

Diane Pleschner-Steele, Executive Director

Attachments: I am attaching for reference two documents of potential interest to the task force:

[1] D.L.Alverson 2004. Searching for Ecosystem Reality – Terms and Concepts. *Accepted for publication in Bulletin of Marine Science*

[2] Scientific and Statistical Committee, Pacific Fishery Management Council, 2004. White Paper – Marine Reserves: Objectives, Rationales, Fishery Management Implications and Regulatory Requirements (Executive Summary)